



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC SEEKS COMMENT ON PERMITTING THE USE OF SMALLER ANTENNAS BY FIXED SERVICE OPERATORS IN THE 11 GHz BAND

Washington, D.C. –Today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Notice) that seeks comment on permitting the installation of smaller antennas by Fixed Service operators in the 10.7-11.7 GHz band. The Notice asks whether this action would serve the public interest by facilitating the efficient use of the 11 GHz band while protecting other users in the band from interference due to the use of smaller antennas. Today's Notice was adopted in response to a Petition for Rulemaking filed by FiberTower, Inc., a wireless backhaul provider, and to comments received in response to that Petition.

The FCC's microwave service rules establish directional antenna standards that are designed to maximize the use of the microwave spectrum, including the 11 GHz band, while avoiding interference among operators. Although the rules do not mandate a specific antenna size, they do specify certain technical parameters – including maximum beamwidth, minimum antenna gain, and minimum radiation suppression – that, given the current state of technology, limit operators to a minimum antenna size of four feet. FiberTower's Petition proposes changes to the technical parameters that would permit the use of smaller Fixed Service antennas with reduced mainbeam gain, increased beamwidth, and modified sidelobe suppression in the 11 GHz band. Today's Notice seeks comment on those proposed changes.

The FCC's microwave rules also establish coordination procedures and interference standards applicable to the operation of FS antennas in the 11 GHz band. Because the proposed use of smaller, lower-gain antennas would result in more radiofrequency energy being transmitted in directions away from the actual point-to-point link, FiberTower proposed coordination rules that would place any burden arising from the use of a smaller antenna on the party opting to deploy such an antenna. The FCC seeks comment in today's Notice on those proposed coordination rules.

Finally, the 11 GHz band is allocated within the United States on a co-primary basis to the Fixed Service, licensed under the FCC's Part 101 microwave rules, and Fixed Satellite Service. In today's Notice, the FCC tentatively concludes that such an allocation does not preclude the FCC from facilitating the efficient use of the band by permitting FS operators to deploy smaller antennas while protecting other users in the band from harmful interference associated with the use of the smaller antennas. The FCC seeks comment on that conclusion. The FCC also seeks comment on whether existing Fixed Service and Fixed Satellite Service licensees would be adequately protected under the proposed rule changes.

Action by the Commission on March 22, 2007, by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 07-38). Chairman Martin and Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate, and McDowell. Separate statement issued by Commissioner Adelstein.

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